
**Natural Resources, Ecology &
Parks Committee**

HB 2287

Brief Description: Concerning Dungeness crab fisheries.

Sponsors: Representatives B. Sullivan, Dunshee and Upthegrove.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Raises the price of a Dungeness crab catch record card from \$3 to \$10.
- Creates a buyback program for commercial licenses in the Puget Sound Dungeness crab fishery.
- Sets in statute the allocation between commercial fishers and recreational fishers in the Puget Sound Dungeness crab fishery.
- Creates two new accounts.

Hearing Date: 4/7/05

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Commercial Puget Sound Dungeness crab fishery

The Puget Sound Dungeness crab commercial fishery has been a closed fishery since 1982. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is prohibited from issuing new licenses for the fishery unless fewer than 150 license holders are eligible to renew their license. To be eligible to renew a license, an applicant must have possessed that license the previous year. Although the Department is prohibited from issuing new licenses, the licenses themselves are transferrable from one holder to another.

The amount of crab that commercial fishers are able to take is determined by the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission). Through a negotiated process, the Commission is given a number that represents the total amount of crab that non-tribal fishers may take in the Puget Sound. The Commission uses that number to determine the crab catch allocation between commercial fishers and recreational fishers.

Catch record cards

The Department issues a catch record card to the purchasers of certain recreational fishing licenses. These cards are returned to the Department with an accounting of species that were caught under the corresponding license. The data gathered from the catch record cards are used for managing the future harvest of the resource.

A catch record card specifically endorsed for Dungeness crab is required in order to take crabs in the Puget Sound. Although a general catch record card is issued at no additional charge, the Department may charge up to \$3.00 for the Dungeness crab card. The fee is waived for the possessors of short-term charter stamp licenses.

Revenues from the sale of the Dungeness crab catch record cards are deposited into the Wildlife Account and may only be used for the sampling, monitoring, and management of the Dungeness crab recreational fishery.

Summary of Bill:

Crab fishery allocations

The allocation of take in the Puget Sound between the non-tribal commercial and recreational Dungeness crab fishers is established in statute. For administrative purposes, the Puget Sound is broken down into eight crustacean management regions. The Department is directed to manage the crab allocation for each region separately.

Statutory crab allocation is directed to be phased in over five years. The final result, after the phase-in is completed, will allocate Dungeness crab as follows:

- Recreational share of crab is no less than 60 percent in one crustacean management region.
- Recreational share of crab is 100 percent six in one crustacean management regions.
- Recreational share of crab is 0 percent in one crustacean management region.

During the five-year process to phase in the final allocation numbers, the split in allocation between commercial and recreational crab fishers is adjusted each year for five years in each crustacean management region. The annual changes move each region towards its final allocation level.

Crab license buyback program

The Department is directed to conduct a buyback of non-tribal commercial Dungeness crab licenses in the Puget Sound fishery. The buyback program must be in operation from January 1, 2006, and must end either on December 31, 2010, or when 150 commercial licenses have been purchased by the Department.

The price that the Department must offer to buyback a license is dependant on the year in which the offer is made. During the first and second years of the buyback program, the Department is authorized to offer \$40,000 for each license. During years 3 and 4, the offer price drops to \$35,000 per license. Finally, after the fourth year, the Department may only offer \$30,000 for each license.

Puget Sound Commercial Dungeness Crab License Buyback Account

A new non-appropriated account, the Puget Sound Commercial Dungeness Crab License Buyback Account (Buyback Account), is created to fund the license purchases. The Buyback Account is designed to receive gifts, grants, and donations. The buyback account will also receive certain proceeds from the sale of recreational Dungeness crab catch record cards. Expenditures from the Buyback Account can only be used by the Department for purchasing non-tribal commercial Puget Sound Dungeness crab licenses.

Dungeness crab catch record cards

The price of a Dungeness crab catch record card is changed from \$3 to \$10. During the crab license buyback program, the first \$150,000 collected each year from these cards must be deposited into the newly created Recreational Dungeness Crab Endorsement Account (Endorsement Account). This appropriated account may be used for sampling, monitoring, and managing the recreational Dungeness crab fishery. Any revenue collected in excess of \$150,000 must be deposited into the Buyback Account. The Endorsement Account will also receive any revenue remaining in the Buyback Account after the buyback program terminates.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.